

The Philosophy Major: A Guide for Student-Athletes

The purpose of this guide is to help you acclimatize to the philosophy major, and to help you find a path through it which is compatible with your athletics schedule. The philosophy major is quite flexible, which we hope will be very helpful for you as you try to combine your studies with your athletics travel and practice schedule. Do please note that this guide does not discuss the requirements of your degree that are not part of the philosophy program, except briefly in Part 2.

This guide is split into 3 parts, which each focus on an aspect of the major. Part 1 gives you an overview of the required courses for the major. Part 2 focuses on electives, with some discussion of lower-division GE classes as well. Part 3 provides an introduction to the various support services the philosophy department has put together for our students, and finally Part 4 gives you some advice about how to be successful in our department.

1 – Course Requirements

The philosophy major requires you to complete 11 courses, with each a regular 3-unit course. Four of the 11 are required courses, and the rest are electives. All of the electives must be upper-division classes (which means they must have a course number of 100 or more). In this section, we will detail each of the requirements, and give some suggestions about how to fulfill them. But, before we get into the specifics of the required courses, I want to begin with some general principles.

One thing that is critically important for student-athletes is to make adequate progress towards your degree each year as required by the NCAA to maintain your eligibility to play your sport. The usual expectation at SJSU is that students will take 15 units per semester (usually this means five classes of three units each). Five courses is a lot in a semester where you have significant travel. My recommendation is to take only four courses in the semester where the bulk of your athletic commitments occur, and to try to make up the extra course by taking either a summer or a winter course. This frees up some time during the busy part of the year for your sport, while keeping you on track to graduate.

The other important recommendation here is to make sure to take advantage of opportunities to use one class to satisfy multiple requirements. The philosophy department offers lots of classes which satisfy General Education requirements, and SJSU Studies requirements. Taking these courses will get them counted towards your philosophy requirements while at the same time fulfilling GE/SJSU Studies requirements. This guide will try to highlight cases where this is possible. The very best way to know which courses are available, and which will also satisfy a GE requirement is to look at the [Upcoming Courses](#) on the philosophy department's website.

1.1 – Required Courses

We have only four required courses and the rest of the major is comprised of electives. The required classes are summarized in the chart below:

	Requirement Area	Courses Satisfying the Requirement
(1)	Logic	• PHIL 9 • PHIL 57 • PHIL 157
(2)	History of Philosophy part 1	• PHIL 70A
(3)	History of Philosophy part 2	• PHIL 70B
(4)	Seminar	• Any class with a course number of 190 or more

You will notice that you have some choices in how you meet even these four requirements. The only classes that are absolutely set in stone are 70A and 70B. So, how should you think about which classes to take for the other two requirements? Let's look at each of them individually.

(1) *Logic*

For the logic, we offer four options. Two of these options (9 and 157) are on the more mathematical end, and two of them (57 and 293) are on the more philosophical end. If you need to pass your lower-division math requirement, then you should take 9 – it will fulfill the math requirement and the philosophy major logic requirement at the same time; if you decide to take 9, you should also consider enrolling in 9W, which is the one-unit support course that accompanies 9. This helps you make the most progress towards your degree. Similarly, if you need to satisfy one of your lower-division humanities requirements, then you should take 57 since it will do the same double-counting trick but with the humanities requirement. 157 and 293 are more niche cases – they will not satisfy any other requirements. However, they are options that should be considered if you have significant scheduling constraints (that is, if you need to satisfy the requirement in a particular semester because of your travel schedule).

(4) *Seminar*

In the case of the seminar requirement, all you need to do is to take a class which has a course number of 190 or more. Any course with a number at least that big will satisfy the requirement. Seminars are special classes that offer deep-dives into specific philosophical topics, or the work of particular philosophers. This means that the topic for a seminar will be different from semester to semester; in order to figure out what the topics for seminars will be, you should look at the [Upcoming Courses](#) section on the philosophy department's website. As a general recommendation, you should wait until you have taken at least a few philosophy classes before attempting a seminar; you should also take them in semesters in which you do not have significant travel demands as the expected workload can be high in such classes.

2 – Electives

The philosophy degree requires you to take seven upper-division elective courses. This means that any philosophy course with a course number of 100 or more will count towards these requirements. As with the required courses, only classes offered by the philosophy department will count. The full list of courses which will count as electives can be found on the department's website under [Upcoming Courses](#). The next two subsections will discuss categories of electives, starting with those which satisfy SJSU Studies areas.

2.1 – SJSU Studies Courses

The philosophy department offers classes which satisfy all three SJSU Studies areas (which are areas R, S, and V). If you take one of these classes, it will count towards your upper-division elective requirement for the philosophy degree, and at the same time satisfy the SJSU Studies area requirement. This means you get to double-count these classes, in a sense. The other thing to know about these courses is that we frequently offer them in the winter and summer terms. This means that you should probably hold off taking these classes until those terms, and you should focus on taking non-SJSU Studies elective courses in regular semesters. The SJSU Studies areas, and the classes that we offer to satisfy them, are listed in the chart below. Remember, you only need to take one class for each area, so for Area V you only need to pick *one* of the options.

SJSU Studies Area	Area Content	Courses Satisfying the Area
Area R	Earth, Environment, and Sustainability	• PHIL 160 – Philosophy of Science
Area S	Self, Society, and Equality in the United States	• PHIL 186 – Professional and Business Ethics
Area V	Cultures and Global Understanding	• PHIL 104 – Asian Philosophy • PHIL 110 – Science, Technology, and Human Values • PHIL 133 – Ethics in Science • PHIL 134 – Computers, Ethics, and Society

2.2 – Non-GE Electives

If you take all of your SJSU Studies courses in the philosophy department, that will cover three of the required seven upper-division electives. This means that you'll need to take four more classes to complete this part of your degree. Any class offered by the philosophy department with a course number of 100 or more counts towards this requirement. We offer three or four non-SJSU Studies upper-division classes each semester, but we rarely offer any of them during the summer or winter sessions. That means that these are classes that you should prioritize taking during regular semesters.

The most important aspect of choosing these electives is finding classes that you think will be interesting. The content of the class itself will vary somewhat depending on which professor is teaching the course. So, you should make sure to look carefully at the course flyers for each class before making a choice of which to take. You can find the flyers here: [Course Flyers](#).

2.3 – Lower Division GE Courses

Before moving on, we should say something about the lower-division courses offered in the philosophy department. If you are arriving as a 1st Year student, with no prior coursework (other than any AP credit you might have earned in high school), then you should consider fulfilling some of your General Education courses in the philosophy department. These classes will be good preparation for the upper division courses, and many students find them quite interesting in themselves. We offer classes that satisfy several of the GE area requirements, as summarized in the table below:

GE Area	Area Content	Courses Satisfying the Area
1B	Critical Thinking and Writing	• PHIL 57 – Critical Thinking
2	Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning	• PHIL 9 – Logic and Mathematics for General Education
3A	Arts	• PHIL 66 – Introduction to Aesthetics
3B	Humanities	• PHIL 10 – Introduction to Philosophy • PHIL 61 – Moral Issues

3 – Support for Philosophy Majors

The philosophy department offers significant support for all our students, but some of them will be of particular interest to student-athletes. In this section I will detail three of them: the philosophy tutoring center, office hours, and the weekly Tea & Cookies.

3.1 – Philosophy Tutoring Center

The philosophy department runs its own tutoring center, which is staffed by students who are advanced philosophy students. It is located in the Philosophy Department, and the schedule is posted on the board outside. Many professors include a link to the tutoring schedule in their syllabus or on their Canvas site as well, so make sure to check there. Tutors can help you with understanding a reading, working on an essay, or even on logic exercises. Also, students who attend tutoring regularly do significantly better in their classes, so make sure to go when you can!

3.2 – Office Hours

Like every professor in the University, all philosophy faculty hold office hours every week. You can find exactly when the office hours are held on the course syllabus. What happens if you cannot go to office hours (for example because you have practice at that time)? Most professors will schedule an appointment to meet with you at another time, so the best thing to do is to email them and ask for one. Just make sure you are asking for an appointment that is during regular business hours (Monday – Friday, 9 AM – 5 PM).

3.3 – Tea & Cookies

Every week the philosophy department hosts a ‘Tea & Cookies’ event, where we sit around drinking tea and eating cookies with each other. You should feel welcome to join, meet other people in the major, and to socialize a bit. Remember, you’re not just an athlete, or just a student – you are a person too, and people need to relax a bit!